

The streetcar, which existed in one form or another in Atlanta from 1871 to 1963, has a certain appeal with passengers that a bus cannot replicate.

"Often, transit discussions focus on building something other people will use, so they will get out of our way on the highway," said Charlie Hales, former Portland commissioner in charge of transportation who now heads transit planning for the HDR consulting firm. "But these streetcar projects are different. We build those because we want to use them in the downtown where we live and work."

In addition to Atlanta, Hales said several other cities are considering streetcar projects, including Charlotte and Winston-Salem, N.C., Miami and Seattle.

Portland had a workable game plan Atlanta might be able to copy, at least in part. Peachtree businesses could create a special district to tax themselves for the streetcar, Robison said. Other money might come from a parking surcharge that could support a bond issue, private contributions and government sources.

Depending on how much money is raised, the Peachtree line could be done in chunks or all at once. In Portland, 2.5 miles of track have been laid in each direction. Another 0.6 of a mile is being constructed in each direction now, with an additional 0.6 of a mile planned after that.

Unlike subways or buses, streetcars are designed to go slow, about 15 mph. Many people use them to go about five or 10 blocks.

Leon Eplan, a former Atlanta planning commissioner serving as a consultant to the streetcar group, said there are three basic markets for the Peachtree streetcar: workers riding MARTA who need to go several additional blocks between rail stations to reach their offices; tourists and conventioners; and workers who need to meet people five, 10 or 15 blocks away for a meeting, lunch or dinner.

"People can quickly hop on and off a streetcar," Eplan said. For short trips, he said, catching a streetcar can be preferable to driving a car, grabbing a taxi or going underground for the subway.

"I think this could ... effectively open up a walking neighborhood up and down the Peachtree spine," added developer Charles Brewer, who said he will "quite likely" support the project financially. "A streetcar is a pedestrian accelerator."

A streetcar line is not that difficult to construct. The track bed is about a foot deep, so there is not much disruption to the utility lines running under the street. Only a few blocks are laid at a time, which also minimizes the disruption.

Power for the streetcar comes from an overhead electrical line that connects to the top of the non-polluting vehicle.

And, finally, Peachtree line organizers believe streetcars can co-exist with cars better than buses do because streetcars are more predictable. They travel at a specific speed and stay on the tracks, allowing drivers to go around them or ride over the lines behind them. Buses are less predictable, changing lanes and speed frequently.

Organizers point out that the Peachtree line would be different from streetcar lines in Tampa and Memphis that focus on tourists, moving them around a concentrated area.

"The message of the tourist trolley is that this is transpor-tainment, a fun ride," said consultant Hales. "But the Portland project and what is now taking place in Tacoma [Wash.] ... send the signal that this is serious transit."

While streetcars in Atlanta likely would get more people using mass transit, organizers do not see it as a panacea for the area's congestion problems.

"I want to be perfectly clear that this is not the sole answer," said consultant Eplan. "Each technology has great benefits and some limitations. What we need is for each technology --- heavy rail, light rail, bus and streetcar --- to operate in the most favorable circumstance. ... And each technology needs to be tied together to the others in order to provide seamless movement."

ATLANTA'S STREETCAR HISTORY

1871

Atlanta's first street railroad rolls away from downtown, pulled by a single horse along mostly unpaved streets to West End.

1889

The city's first electric streetcar tootles off to Inman Park, Atlanta's first suburban residential development.

1900

The Atlanta City Council requires streetcar companies to provide "separate cars or compartments" for "the white and colored races." The streetcar operators evade the expense of providing separate cars, but require blacks to sit in the back.

1905

The first streetcars roll between Atlanta and Marietta. Within a few years, the dominant streetcar company has 195 miles of track, not counting the Marietta line, and serves Atlanta, Decatur, East Point, College Park and Hapeville.

1928

Six people die when two streetcars collide head-on near Marietta. It was Atlanta's worst transit accident to that point.

1949

The trackless trolley, an electric bus that gets its power from overhead cables, supersedes tracked trolleys.

1950

Atlanta Transit Co.'s trackless trolleys and buses operate over 244 miles of streets, and Atlantans average 241 rides apiece each year.

1963

Last of the trackless trolleys leaves streets, pushed out by diesel buses.

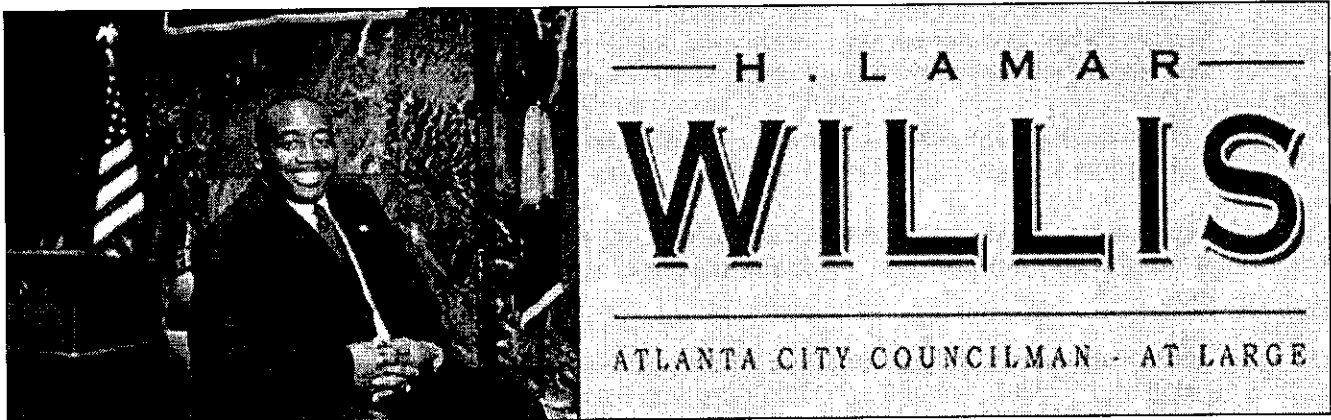
--- Compiled by staff writer Hank Ezell based on information from the two-volume "Mule to MARTA" by Jean Martin.



City of Atlanta Mayor and City Council President Contact Information

To contact the Office of the Mayor, you may call 404-330-6100 or visit www.ci.atlanta.ga.us.

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In the News In the News In the News

2003

News from the Atlanta Journal Constitution - August 1, 2003

Trolley plans pick up speed

Peachtree feasibility study could get green light soon

By HENRY UNGER
 The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

City streetcar organizers say they already have raised \$100,000 to pay for a feasibility study to evaluate their plan to run trolleys on Peachtree from downtown to Buckhead.

Pending favorable results, the private, nonprofit group hopes to raise an estimated \$200 million for an eight-mile streetcar line that could begin operating in five years.

Organizers of Atlanta Streetcar believe the trolley would spawn further commercial and residential development along Peachtree, as well as serve commuters and tourists traveling short distances.

The group plans to file incorporation papers and announce its board of directors next week, said businessman Michael Robison, who is spearheading the effort. Some of the financial commitments to fund the feasibility study have come from board members.

Robison, Atlanta City Councilman H. Lamar Willis, who chairs the council's Transportation



Ron Dingman / Special
 Vicky Diede, the streetcar project manager in Portland, Ore., shows off her city's popular streetcar system to Atlanta Councilman H. Lamar Willis (center) and businessman Michael Robison (right), who are leading Atlanta's effort.

Committee, and state Sen. Tommie Williams (R-Lyons), chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, recently returned from Portland, Ore., where they grilled officials and developers about their success with a new streetcar line.

A \$55 million private-public investment helped create more than \$1 billion in redevelopment in what was a struggling Portland warehouse district.

What's more, Robison said, the project has been so popular that developers, retailers and landowners have asked Portland streetcar officials to expand the line to other areas of the city.

"We walked away with the confidence that people will ride streetcars," said Robison, chief executive of Atlanta-based Lanier Holdings, which owns garages and parking lots nationwide. "The ride is smooth, quiet, comfortable and nostalgic."

It has been 40 years since the last electric trolley rolled along Atlanta's streets.

Financing a new streetcar line on Peachtree would require a combination of funding sources, just as it did in Portland. Money could come from private contributions, a special tax district created by Peachtree businesses, a

parking surcharge that could support a bond issue and government support, Robison said.

"The trip to Portland was very insightful," Willis said. "The potential for development along Peachtree Street will be phenomenal, given Portland's success in a smaller metro area."

While many think of Peachtree as already quite developed, Willis, Robison and others believe there is still opportunity for ambitious projects and in-fill development.

The group plans an initial board meeting this fall at which it expects to green-light the feasibility study, Robison said.

The study, which would take up to four months to complete, would look at potential ridership, revenue, expenses, financing and route options.

"It's either going to economically make sense, or it's not," Robison said.

In addition to a route along Peachtree, Robison said the group is discussing a second phase of a streetcar line that could circulate around key downtown tourist spots, including the new Georgia Aquarium and World of Coca-Cola planned next to Centennial Olympic Park, CNN Center, Phillips Arena, Georgia World Congress Center and Underground.

That could cost \$50 million more.

Robison believes money can be raised for both phases.

"We don't see it as daunting, because we believe we will be able to show the inherent value to businesses and other stakeholders," he said.

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M E M O R A N D U M

To: Mayor's Office, City Council, Allan Abbot
From: Larry Worth - StarTran
Date: January 31, 2003
Subject: StarTran 2003 Town Hall Issues and Responses
cc: Town Hall Attendees

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The following are the issues raised to staff at the January 11, 2003 StarTran Town Hall Meeting, and responses to those issues. The StarTran Advisory Board approved these responses at the January 30, 2003 meeting.

- **Commuter Rail Services/Grid System/Additional & Extended Routes/Increased Service Days & Times** – The future of StarTran, and other public transit services, within Lincoln and Lancaster County through the 2025 planning period is addressed in the “2025 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan”, as adopted May 28, 2002. Several long-range transit improvements are included for implementation within the planning period, including:
 - ▶ Maintain the current radial network to the Downtown, with supplemental service to other portions of the urban area with transfer options (near-term). Expand the modified grid system while maintaining productive elements of the radial service – target emerging mixed-use activity centers and corridors into the grid services (long-term).
 - ▶ Monitor/modify transit services to maximize transit services in response to changes in development patterns and users’ needs.
 - ▶ Consider rail service and other transit modes to provide regional public transportation services (particularly between Lincoln and Omaha) during the interim and long term.
 - ▶ Establish a long-term funding commitment to public transportation to provide for transit services for existing and future developments within the City.
 - ▶ Pursue contracted transit service opportunities with employment, entertainment, and commercial uses.

A key transit-related policy in the “2025 Comprehensive Plan” is that, “As a public service, StarTran transit service should be funded and supported similar to any other public service”. StarTran looks forward to increasing public transit services, as addressed by the “2025 Comprehensive Plan” within the planning period as funding is available.

- **Multilingual Bus Schedules/StarTran Information** – StarTran staff are endeavoring to contract with organizations/individuals to produce StarTran schedules and other rider information in Spanish. Efforts to do so will continue, with such information potentially produced in other languages.

- **Extend Service into Haymarket Area** – StarTran acknowledges the current need to provide public transit services into the Haymarket Area, during daytime and evenings. Such service extensions/additions have been proposed and considered in cooperation with Haymarket representatives but have been unable to be funded.
- **Service to Municipal Airport** – The potential need for public transit services to the Municipal Airport and proximate area, for both employees and airline passengers, is acknowledged. Such public transit services have been proposed on a contractual basis, per the Comprehensive Plan, to the Lincoln Airport Authority; however, interest has not been expressed to participate in such an arrangement.
- **Advocate for Improved Sidewalks** – The Pedestrians portion of the “2025 Comprehensive Plan” acknowledges that “walking is an essential part of daily activities”, and that “consistent maintenance of the existing pedestrian system and additional facilities are needed”. The inclusion of sidewalks as a mode of transportation effectively, “elevates the status of pedestrians and bicyclists in the community to be an integral part of the Transportation Plan”.
- **Bike Racks on Buses** – The installation of bicycle racks on StarTran buses was addressed and considered by appropriate groups during development of the “2025 Comprehensive Plan”. Liability and maintenance issues precluded the inclusion of this proposal in the “2025 Comprehensive Plan”.
- **Snow Removal at Bus Shelters Utilizing Heated Sidewalks** – StarTran acknowledges the importance of snow/ice removal within and proximate to bus shelters. When electric utilities are available, the potential of underground heating will be considered.
- **Guaranteed Ride Home Program (per Albuquerque)** – The City of Albuquerque Transit Department has a Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) program in place. Staff have secured information regarding this program, and found . . .
 - ▶ GRH is intended to be “insurance” for commuters who regularly utilize alternate transportation modes (i.e., car-pool, van-pool, bus, bicycle, or walk) to work or school at least three times/week, that the commuter will not be stranded if an emergency were to arise. In case of emergency, the commuter receives a free ride to the destination. GRH is intended to instill confidence to utilize alternate transportation to commute.
 - ▶ If an emergency arises at work or school, or one misses the usual ride home due to unforeseen circumstances, the commuter may utilize GRH.
 - ▶ One must register with the city to use GRH, and utilize the program only for valid emergencies, to include:
 - Illness at work or school
 - Personal medical emergency
 - Family member is ill
 - Family member emergency
 - Left stranded by a car-pool or van-pool
 - Missed the *last* scheduled bus pick up
 - Unscheduled overtime *after* arriving at work

- Problems with bicycle
- Any *valid* emergency
- Use of GRH is limited to five GRH rides per year, and requests must be only for rides to home from workplace or school. Ride requests originating from a residence are not honored.

Staff will be in further contact with Albuquerque GRH officials, as to cost, levels of utilization, etc, will evaluate the potential of such a program for StarTran commuters, and will forward all information to the Advisory Board for consideration.

- **Additional Locations to Purchase Discounted Passports (utilizing a Russ's Card)** – Currently, discounted (\$5 price reduction with a Russ's Privilege Plus Card) StarTran passports may be purchased only at StarTran offices. Russ's Market has agreed to honor this discount at their stores beginning with the March passports. Their store locations are 27th & Hwy 2, 17th & Washington, 63rd & Havelock, 68th & "O", 33rd & Hwy 2, S Coddington, and 70th & Van Dorn.
- **Annual Passport** – Annual StarTran passports are not available, as the one-time cost of an annual passport is significant, \$360. Previous consideration of an annual passport has acknowledged this significant financial loss if an annual passport were lost or destroyed. Patrons may purchase passports for multiple months at StarTran, and may purchase passports by mail, postage-free.
- **Credit Card Service** – It is understood that City departments may secure credit card equipment for the convenience of citizens when making purchases/paying fees. StarTran will evaluate the cost of such services, and the potential level of use of such a service.
- **Magnetic Passport** – The fareboxes in all StarTran buses are programmed to be replaced in four years. "Smart Card" technology is expected to be included in these new fareboxes, which would enable patrons to utilize a debit card to make fare transactions.
- **Laminate Passports** – Plastic passport holders are available to StarTran patrons, however, passport lamination is also now available, upon request of patrons, at the StarTran offices.
- **Expansion of Ride & Shop Program** – StarTran marketing/promotion staff have and are continuing to, implement the Ride & Shop Program at commercial businesses served by StarTran in locations other than the downtown area.

Approximately twenty persons attended the 2003 StarTran Town Hall Meeting. Staff received several very positive comments regarding the change to an "open house" type format. This format afforded an opportunity for interaction between the attendees and StarTran staff, which resulted in improved communication/understanding by all, and more issues brought forward for consideration. It is recommended that the "open house" format continue to be utilized for future Town Hall meetings.